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Conditions that engender futility and hostility among Negroes can be reversed by competent, dedicated teachers. Factors leading to Negro attitudes of defeat are analyzed. Experience of rejection and awareness of being different and inferior are among the first realizations of the Negro. From rejection grows fear of white institutions and of competition with white people. The fear crystallizes into hostility, which sometimes expresses itself in violence, but just as often leads to defeat, resignation, and a feeling of futility. To overcome the defeatism that prevents many Negroes from trying to surmount obstacles in their environment, teachers should develop a sense of dedication, learn to establish empathy with and understand deprived minority children, and correct Negro attitudes of rejection by fully accepting them. Acceptance does not come from desegregation alone, for changing habits of withdrawn suspicion and caution in all interracial contacts takes time. Before holding Negro students responsible for achievement levels on a par with advantaged children, teachers should give them extra attention and remedial work and should neutralize the environment of their student world. Promising programs include a new institute of human relations at the University of Wisconsin, an effort by a major foundation to strengthen Negro college placement programs, and the commitment of church resources to play an active role. Teacher education programs, to be successful, should be based on a belief in the equality of all human beings.							
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" REVERSING THE SPIRAL TOWARD FUTILITY "

an address

by

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for

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
Coarad Hilton Hotel -- Chicago, Illinois

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The burden of this address is that for eighty years, since the beginning of the concept of racial separateness as a national institution, there has been a cause and effect, one-two punch operating so effectively in Negro life that now one can hardly tell what is cause and what is effect, which is punch number one and which is number two. The product of discrimination is used to prove that discrimination is fitting and proper. This process has been moving like a whirling spiral carrying the Negro on towards futility. One may understand the maze of urban school problems, the violence of last summer, and the apathy and inertia of hordes of teenagers in terms of this spiral having spun to a dead halt at the point of futility.

This is one more metaphor used to capture a grim reality that we will have to live with for a few more summers. We have used all sorts of appellatives for this phenomenon; we have called those trapped at the end of this spiral the "culturally deprived", the "culturally diversified", the "socially retarded", the "sub-culture", and you name it!

The fact is that we have finally come to focus on the consequences of discrimination in opportunity -- opportunity in education and in employment. We have a half

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million youth out of school and out of work, "drop-outs", half of whom are Negro. And no one knows how many "drop-outs" there are, those who are still on the rolls, loitering in the halls, smoking in the rest rooms and strolling in and out of classes without homework.

These young people are at the end of this spiral toward futility. More than half of them were reared in homes with only the mother in charge. Half of their parents reached less than the seventh grade in school. Their schools were over-crowded, understaffed and their teachers were the products of the same circumstances, only ten years earlier and therefore without the benefit of the ten years of greatest progress in these schools -- the ten years since the 1954 Supreme Court decision against segregated schools.

This picture is further embroidered by the fact that these young people customarily saw only white faces in the advertisements picturing successful living, only white men in important business positions, no Negro state trooper, no Negro airline hostess, no Negro news commentator, no Negro clerks in the big stores. They had no reason to be convinced that hard work would be rewarded with a good job. Only a handful of Negroes in New York and Washington had really good jobs. One could make money playing ball, dancing and singing. But, lacking these talents, there was little else to hope for.

Therefore, the backwaters of fear, hostility and defeatism have stagnated in the minds and hearts of these youngsters. We have a major engineering job to do if this situation is to be changed. We cannot substitute statistics for effort, semantics for concern or talk-fests and banquet speeches for hard work.

We need to discover what causes this spiral to spin on toward futility, and try to stop it, put it in reverse and cause it to move toward fulfillment and success.

Let us look at the spiral. It begins with those first experiences of rejection and that early awareness that society has a special niche for the Negro. Even though

there are all of the replicas of the larger "white" world present in some form in the Negro ghetto, the unspoken understanding is that the world is for others, not "our kind." In order to survive this arrangement, feeling whole and aspiring, one has to pull all kinds of tricks on his mind. The worst kind of schizophrenia is frequently the result.

The spiral churns on from rejection to fear. Fear of big words, fear of printed tests, fear of large, clean rooms, fear of police, fear of failure, fear of embarrassment, fear of interviews. I recall a basketball player at our college who had been recruited out of one of our big city's slums. He had played out his eligibility and still needed a few hours and grade points to graduate. When he saw the world closing in on him, he packed to leave the campus and return to the slums. He had been turned down so many times in life that he considered no alternative but defeat. He was afraid to try some of those long shots.

My wife and I learned about him, put him up in our guest room as an experiment and let him work for his board and tuition. Today, rather than lurking in the shadows and leaning on the bars of that town, he is a teacher helping other youngsters to climb out of their apathy. It required someone to bend down over him, displace his defeatism with confidence, open a door and help him through.

This fear crystallizes into hostility. What concerns me most today is that unthinking and recalcitrant whites will want to do political and psychological battle with Negro youth, translate their irritation over aggressive Negro efforts into a grand silence of belligerence and resistance. They have no way of assessing the hostility that rejection and fear have already generated, and the consequences can become - even yet - a bloody, rather than a non-violent pursuit of the Negroes' objectives.

It is just as likely that instead of fighting, Negroes by the millions will spend their madness and indignation among themselves and lapse into resignation, defeat and

ended. In Nigeria the Peace Corps has nearly 600 and when the postcard was dropped

futility. Here is where the spiral delivers them now!

Everybody loses. The unskilled, angry people are a burden. Unproductive citizens and semi-literate crowds in the streets are the easy prey of every vice, the victims of every form of exploitation, and will not always follow the most responsible leadership -- and everybody loses!

This issue is especially relevant for you. You train the nation's teachers, those who have the earliest and the longest contact with the young. These teachers colleges are now becoming just colleges. You have the elasticity to grow and I predict that you will be the ones to take the expanding enrollments and teach most Americans for the next twenty years. Your disciples can begin now, with the inspiration that you will give them, and they can bring to bear on this problem their new insights, their strength of heart and breadth of vision. And they can start that spiral moving in the other direction in September.

In Nigeria I saw thirty-five Peace Corps Volunteers at the University of Nsukka begin their tour of duty under the most trying circumstances. They were called spies. A postcard inadvertently dropped and highly publicized had infuriated their African students. Martin Luther King was arrested in Birmingham and four Negro children were killed in a Sunday School by white terrorists. How much more could one ask for to kill the first Peace Corps effort in Nigeria?

But the Volunteers studied their situation and learned it well. They could not afford to parrot worn cliches about Africans, Negroes, democracy, communism or colonialism. This "savvy" gained them the respect of their students. They lived and played and worked with them, defying all of the old concepts of how white colonials should deal with Africans. And they won! Some of them returned to that staff after their tours ended. In Nigeria the Peace Corps has nearly 600 and when the postcard was dropped

we had less than 60.

We can flood this country with teachers capable of seeing the world through the eyes of the deprived minority youth and make this the most wonderful achievement in American education. With your leadership, they will start that spiral moving the other way this September.

Rejection must be corrected by acceptance. This does not mean giving a Negro high praise for low performance. But it does mean a little extra attention to convince him that he and his problems are no surprise and all in a day's work. The necessity for this varies and soon it will fade as a new crop comes to flower, but now it is necessary.

Acceptance is one step from confidence and self-assurance. How can white coaches take Negro athletes and prepare them to play before strangers and keep them poised and confident? Do coaches know more than we? Granted they have a built-in system of immediate rewards, the applause of the crowds and newspaper clippings. But we need to find comparable motivating devices in English and Math. It has been done, and with a deep desire I believe it can still be done.

A young Negro teacher in Newark is now drawing attention to her work because she is taking hardened junior high school girls from one of the toughest neighborhoods and making them love opera, symphonies and serious drama. She puts in long hours and has poured much effort into her work. But she testifies that the rewards are worth it. Parents come to one of her performances of the Mikado and wept to see their daughters pursuing this type of endeavor. These were tears of joy at something worthwhile and not tears of grief in a court room or a morgue.

One does not work alone in this. Our major universities are stirred up and Wisconsin has a new institute of human relations, as one example, addressing itself

to this issue.

The major foundations are now discovering Negro youth. One is preparing a massive program to strengthen Negro college placement programs. This will be a pace-setting device. When their brothers, cousins and uncles get better jobs, they will want to learn more faster.

The churches have grown skeptical of trusting individual communicants to play private roles in this area, and they have committed their resources to change the character and face of America. Last summer the students who volunteered to go to Mississippi were shocked to learn that the churches had quit hiding their heads in the sand and had come forth with an orientation program at one of our fine colleges. This commitment was reassuring to those making their first gestures toward brotherhood.

The government is clear on this. Our President could not speak more succinctly than he has on equal opportunity. So, be my guest! It is right. It is acceptable. It is necessary. It is patriotic. It is professional^{ly} challenging and personally rewarding.

Recently I sat in a briefing session for personnel managers of one of our largest corporations. The leader, speaking on company policy, said this: "Up to now we have sought only the top 5% of a class, the cream. We have had also minimum standards beneath which we will not go for anybody. In recognition of the special problems of Negroes in preparing for our types of jobs, we will not only go after the top 5% but we will hire Negroes who clear our minimum standards by a safe margin and who show potential for growth."

This is all that Whitney Young and Julius Thomas of the Urban League have advocated. Our country has established special programs for agriculture, adult education, the blind, the deaf, the orphaned and the immobile child who needs a visiting teacher.

Even though it is certainly more difficult to formalize, we are saying now that the same attention and concern should be brought to bear on the Negro child as he feels his way out of the blight and limitations of segregated education in the ghetto into the broad stream of education where all Americans flow.

One day we will look back with great pride on the manner in which education in the U. S. took on the clinical aspects of integration, that day-by-day tedium of making the delicate actions routine and the risky decisions standard procedure. Our gratification is even deeper as we ponder the alternatives of hatred, neglect, chaos and disorder.

When you have succeeded in assuring acceptance and establishing confidence, the next step is obvious, melting hostility and belligerence.

A few weeks ago I stood in the lobby of an all-Negro YMCA in a big mid-western town reading the report of the death of the missionary physician in the Congo. I must have exclaimed by shock and dismay loudly, for a youngster with a mop came up behind me and said, "What's wrong with that? What is he out there for? You mean you're crying because they killed a white man?" This is the hostility that results from rejection and fear. He seemed to be showing off a little. I could not believe that he was earnest. But the prospect of this is frightening.

Let us not stand by, enjoying the status of our profession, fighting for salaries and tenure, and miss this opportunity to focus on a serious American issue, a splendid opportunity to show the world how a dynamic democracy can recover from an illness and renovate itself without bloodshed and violence and hasten to prove to the Negro Americans that what made them so angry no longer exists. Let us join hands in building a multiracial republic of law and justice and equality. This attitude will inspire affirmative openness rather than hostility.

This affirmative openness that becomes the propulsion towards fulfillment and success is not easy to come by, because a Negro youngster -- and even more so for my generation -- never really knows when his environment has changed from hostility or indifference to acceptance. After all, he can be heralded as a fast-moving half-back, kissed by the Homecoming Queen in public on Saturday and then discover Sunday afternoon that the luxury apartments going up in a new sub-division are closed to his "twice-degreed" family doctor. He seeks a summer job at the local hotel and all of the bellmen are now white. He goes on his first plane flight and the seat next to him is the only one that remains vacant. His team is planning a banquet for the coach and the Country Club has turned them down because their policy has not changed yet. This is 1965! U.S.A.!

Whereas many worthwhile changes have beckoned to him and encouraged him to believe that his environment is amicable and trustworthy, still the vestiges of racism are cloistered in innumerable crevices of his experience. They reach out and grab him when he is least expecting it.

More than that, the encouraging news about things changing is not validated in his total mode of living if his existence is typical of the masses of Negroes. Housing is still rigidly proscribed, the poverty of his neighborhood remains indelible, his parents are locked in job categories that will not change for them. The capital required to buy a home would never be accumulated on their minimal earnings. So he is caged in a ghetto, unexpected and unwanted outside of it, and his participation in the life of the community is always peripheral.

So it will take some extra effort to penetrate the callousness that custom wears on the mind of the young Negro. A Saturday picnic is a tease. Membership in one hobby club is a joke. There must be some consistency in a corridor of his experience that

proves to him that a solid change has begun. It could happen in his school experience.

○ Last year I visited a sophisticated Eastern preparatory school for boys -- the kind of \$2500 variety. In a student body of nearly 400 there were five Negroes. Four of them had a Negro roommate and the fifth lived alone until he dropped out. That was the 1963-64 school year and I had been invited to help the students to understand something about America's race problem. What could I say that would offset the image of the Negro that was so glaring on that campus? The Negro boys had been admitted and then quarantined as if they had the measles. It is like inviting the Rabbi to dinner and serving pork chops, or your Hindu friends and serving hamburger!

I repeat, affirmative openness comes as an involuntary neurological response to life after there has been sufficient experience to prove that the world is at least neutral -- if not friendly. This must be clearly understood. One who has known nothing but rejection and the cool indifference of a prosperous, fun-loving society does not suddenly leap to Hedonic glee because a resolution was passed. The habit of withdrawn suspicion and caution in every interracial contact takes time to change.

○ Therefore, in order to hold our Negro pupils responsible for attaining performance at par, we must continue to work at the problem of neutralizing the environment of their student world. Returning to that prep school for a moment, when I asked one of the brighter Negro boys how he felt about this ostracism, he climbed the summit of sagacity and came to his faculty's defense. He said, "After all, these teachers grew up in Eastern suburbs where no Negroes lived, attended Eastern colleges where they saw Negroes only occasionally, and they think we are happy living together. They don't mean to insult. "So", he continued, "while it makes us appear to be something between a vegetable and a human to be set apart like this, we'll prove to them that we are human!"

Now just why should he be expected to compete in the school on par, overcome his deficiencies that hang on from segregated early school experience in a poor community, learn to love books that he could not get to look at in an all-white library back home, and in addition to this have the adult sense at age 14 to rationalize the insensitive bias of experienced school administrators?

As we prepare teachers for the nation, we can go a long way toward this goal, the assurance of a pattern of experience in our own institutions, the creation of an atmosphere on our campuses that will send out waves of teachers, every June, all over America, wanting to see the nation guarantee to every citizen that no grand conspiracy is operating against him. Hardly can any other group take such an assignment and have such potential for accomplishment. And I believe that this is the challenge you want!

I have talked of the typical Negro youth. There are many who have been helped through this maze, some quite by accident, and they are happy that they had sufficient guidance and encouragement that they could be selective about their environment. They could choose those stimuli that they would let cross the threshold of consciousness and reject those others. They became deaf to the insults and ignored the indignities. As a blind man learns the safe way home, they have tipped through society like walking on eggs. They have practised "feeling whole" and equal and they have designed life accordingly. When my brother and I were finishing high school the depression was whipping our town with long, persistent lashes. College seemed no live option. We had played horns in the high school band, so we applied to the Navy as musicians. We were rejected, Negroes did not blow horns in the Navy in 1937. They cooked, scrubbed and waited on officers. They did not blow horns. But we took this in stride. We had enjoyed a happy

home with loving parents who had been blessed with education. We joked out it. We selected other stimuli and barred this discouragement from our perceptive masses. My brother loved music more than I. He pressed on through college and finished in music. He was drafted in 1941 and eventually was sent to the Army Music School at Fort Meyer. For 22 years he has been a Chief Warrant Officer Band Master and is now the Band Master at Stewart Air Force Base in Newburgh, New York. And we have helped a sister through a Masters, another brother through dental school and the baby brother through medicine.

Not every Negro needs to do that to succeed. Not everyone will succeed. But this was possible over the past twenty years under the most adverse circumstances. It was possible given the added ingredient that a family was cohesively bound together and parents had the resource of a Presbyterian mission college education to make available to their children. This is not typical of Negro society. Half of Harlem's youth live with one parent and not eight percent of Negro mothers have been to college. We just cannot expect every Negro to be a Ralph Bunche, run a thousand yards a season for the Cleveland Browns or bat .300 for the Braves to make it in life.

Without paternalism and cheap, showy condescension, the educators of our land must make a fast break beyond the structures of mores that punish a child for being born of Negro parents and find ways of reducing the subtle, hostile practices of racism to a minimum.

This raises a final issue. How can this be done without the highest motivation on the part of teachers and the cultivation of a concern for others that is the by-product of the fall-out of high religion. Human nature is prone to protect an advantage. We don't

like to talk about "original sin" but we must deal with it. In the comic strip, "Peanuts," Linus says to Charlie Brown: "Do you know what the whole trouble with you is?" Charlie Brown replies: "No, and I don't want to know!" Then they stare at each other. The stare is broken when Linus says, "The whole trouble with you is that you don't want to know what the whole trouble with you is!"

Educators are not exempt from the atavistic drag of human failure and egocentricity. We are not supermen. We just cannot pick up from here and go out as world-changers unless something changes us first.

We have declared that as a nation we must not use our public institutions for religious training. But if people are there, religious training will happen. You can no more hide your beliefs than you can sneak daybreak past a healthy rooster. Your arched eyebrows, your voice inflection, your hands, your sub-clauses, and where you put that "nevertheless" in a paragraph will be dead give-aways. A teacher cannot look down on life in Olympian detachment. He is involved and his students know it. A teacher education program that fails to challenge the hierarchy of values that we deliver to our young through the classrooms is deficient and neglectful.

A teacher must have a responsible working hypothesis that answers the questions: Why are we here? Where are we going? What is our destiny? What is the best way? Is the universe on our side? Is life a game of chance? Is there purpose in it all?

You cannot peddle a Catholic answer. You cannot sell a Baptist salvation formula. You cannot require an Episcopalian creed and Methodist hymn-singing. But the questions must be raised and the students must see in the teacher a living incarnation of at least one set of viable answers that can be lived out to its logical extremity!

And one of these answers must be on how to treat other creatures of God who happen to be different. Shall I hate them? Shall I endure them? Shall I tolerate them? Shall I separate them? Shall I destroy them? Shall I respond to their need in respect and love, try to see the world through their eyes and then begin to find real value in my life by reversing the spiral toward futility in theirs, so help me God!

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